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Progress towards the Czar's Conference

The conference proposed by Nicholas II. continues to engage the serious thought of the world, in spite of the rumors of war with which the atmosphere is charged. The heart and judgment of the world go that way. Of that there is no doubt. Representative organizations of all kinds continue to express not their approval only, but their devoutest wish for the success of the conference. The Emperor's palace has been flooded with telegrams, letters, resolutions and addresses, from all parts of the earth. The meaning of this is clear. The heart and conscience of the world are for peace. We hope they are soon to be strong enough to do away with war.

It is not yet known when the conference will be held. The Russian government has expressed the wish that it meet this winter. The King of Belgium has written with his own hand to the Czar proposing that the meeting be held at Brussels, and the Czar is thought to favor this proposal.

All of the great powers, except France have sent their replies to St. Petersburg, and France may have done so by this time, though we have seen no notice of it. The smaller powers have all responded most favorably. So has Japan from the East.

The reservations made in some of the replies are in curious contrast to the straightforward and whole-hearted character of the Czar's invitation. Turkey has expressed her readiness to take part, but wishes to know beforehand whether the program will be such as to interfere with the completion of the arming of her existing forces, which she says is intended only to maintain the *status quo*. Germany, Austria and Italy, the powers composing the Triple Alliance, have made their approval conditional on the maintenance of the present territorial limits.

These reservations are not more than might have been expected in diplomatic replies to a note of so much moment. If the conference, when it meets, should restrict itself entirely to the matter of future armaments, there would be ample justification for its assembling. A mere cessation of the growth of armaments, if it could be brought about, would be an inestimable blessing. But the delegates, when they assemble, will find it impossible to limit their deliberations to mere stopping of the growth of armaments. The question of reduction in some form, or of equalization according to population, will necessarily come up. We shall be greatly surprised, when the conference meets in Brussels or elsewhere, if the discussions do not take a much wider range even than this. The question of the judicial means of settling international differences is inseparably connected with that of disarmament, and it will not be possible to make any satisfactory arrangement for the latter which does not include the former. If there ever was a meeting on the assembling of which all praying men ought to ask the blessing of Almighty God it is this approaching conference.